

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 and 18-20 are pending in the above-identified application. Claims 1, 5, and 20 are amended. Claims 2-4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 14 are cancelled. Claims 18 and 19 are withdrawn. No new subject matter is added. It is respectfully submitted that this response is fully responsive to the Office Action dated June 14, 2005.

Claims 1-15 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Smith et al.* (U.S. 2004/0026031 A1) in view of *Suenaga et al.* (U.S. 6,569,696 B2), *Anai et al.* (U.S. 6,458,208 B1) and *Shimane* (U.S. 2003/0017256 A1). Applicant amends claims 1, 5, and 20 for clarification purposes. In view of the amendments and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejections and allow all pending claims.

The Examiner asserted that *Shimane* teaches that the temperature of the resist and ambient humidity are preset in order to obtain optimum conditions. Thus, the Examiner argued that it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of *Smith et al.*, *Suenaga et al.* and *Anai et al.* with the teachings of *Shimane* to enable independently controlling the temperature and humidity conditions of the resist deposition unit of *Smith et al.*, *Suenaga et al.* and *Anai et al.*

However, in the present invention, the resist is applied onto the substrate in a humid atmosphere controlled to have a prescribed room temperature and a prescribed humidity so as to suppress fluctuation of a moisture amount on the substrate surface and thus to make a moderate amount of moisture reproducibly exist on the substrate surface. By such controls of the

temperature and the humidity of the humid atmosphere, the present invention realizes the formation of the resist film having a uniform thickness with high reproducibility. *Shimane*, on the other hand, neither teaches nor suggests such specific controls of the temperature and the humidity of the humid atmosphere in the step of applying the resist on the substrate.

Furthermore, the present invention has a feature that the substrate is carried to the step of thermal processing, and from the step of thermal processing to the step of making the surface of the substrate hydrophobic through a carrying compartment with a third dehumidified atmosphere therein. The carrying compartment corresponds to the arm moving region 26 in the embodiment. Not only the steps of thermal processing and making the surface of the substrate hydrophobic themselves but also the steps of carrying the substrate are performed in the dehumidified atmosphere in the present invention. In addition, the substrate is carried to the step of thermal processing, and from the step of thermal processing to the step of making the surface of the substrate hydrophobic through the same one compartment. The substrate is carried in the same compartment with the dehumidified atmosphere therein, whereby the substrate can be efficiently transferred to the step of thermal processing and to the step of making the substrate surface hydrophobic, excluding the influences of the moisture to said steps. Accordingly, the generation of foreign substances on the surface of the substrate can be effectively suppressed without the decrease of the throughput of the method and the complication of the method.

The Examiner argues that it would have been obvious that the atmosphere has to be dehumidified through the step of thermal processing to the step of making the substrate surface

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hydrophobic in consideration of the objective during the steps. However, even if the objective during the steps is taken into consideration, it cannot be obvious that the substrate is carried between the steps through the same carrying compartment with a dehumidified atmosphere therein, integrating the steps through the carrying compartment. It is also evident that the combined teachings of the cited references neither teaches nor suggests such a specific carrying path of a substrate through the same compartment with a dehumidified atmosphere therein in a resist applying method.

As discussed above, even if the teachings of the cited prior art were combined, the present invention according to claims 1, 20 and dependent claims 5, 8, 11, 12 and 15 would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of these claims be withdrawn.


In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, Applicant submits that the claims, as herein amended, are in condition for allowance. Applicant requests such action at an early date.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action by applicant would be desirable to place the application in condition for allowance; the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicant's undersigned attorney.

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If this paper is not timely filed, Applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,
WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Auito', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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